

Real face daunting trip to Vigo

MADRID, Apr 9 (Reuters/Internet) Real Madrid coach John Toshack is battling an injury crisis ahead of Sunday's key Spanish Primera Liga clash with Celta Vigo.

Real, up to fourth place after a run of four successive victories under Toshack, still find themselves seven points behind leaders Barcelona.

Defeat against Celta Vigo, who are above them in the table on the goal difference, would effectively put an end to their hopes of catching Barcelona.

Real were run ragged by Celta's highly mobile attack when the two teams met earlier in the season, the Galicians scoring a deserved 2-1 victory at the Bernabeu.

And Toshack's hopes of avoiding the same treatment this time have been hit hard by the absence of three-quarters of his defence -- plus renewed doubt over the presence of his star striker.

Fernando Hierro, Ivan Campo and Roberto Carlos are all definitely out, having received their fifth yellow cards in last week's 3-2 win at home to Alaves.

And Predrag Mijatovic, who vowed to return after missing the Alaves game as a protest at NATO strikes against Yugoslavia, is suffering from a back injury and may not make the trip.

Toshack is likely to shuffle his pack considerably on Sunday, pairing veteran Manuel Sanchis alongside Aitor Karanka in the middle of a back four, with Robert Jarni dropping back from midfield to take over on the left.

And that defensive uncertainty has had Celta midfielder Valery Karpin talking up his side's chances of seeing off Real for the second time this year.

"We've already beaten them in the Bernabeu and we're therefore very confident going into this game," the Russian international said.

"The players are fully concentrated and we've got a lot of motivation playing host to Real Madrid."

Other Primera Liga matches this weekend (league positions in brackets):

Saturday, April 10 Tenerife (19) v Barcelona (1) Louis van Gaal's side have matched Real point for point over the last four games and are strong favourites to make it five successive victories at relegation-threatened Tenerife.

The home side will be without injured defender Pablo Paz for this tough clash with the champions, Barcelona, who can go nine points clear at the top of the table with victory, are missing central defender Abelardo Fernandez but influential midfielder Luis Enrique is close to regaining fitness after a thigh injury and could be in the bench.

Sunday, April 11 Alaves (17) v Deportivo Coruna (5)

Alaves have a doubt over midfielder Hermes Aldo Desio (calf strain) while Pablo Gomez and Ibon Begona are suspended. Deportivo, surprisingly held to a 1-1 draw at home by Atletico Madrid last weekend, will look to get their title campaign back on track. They will be without the suspended Flavio Conceicao.

Espanyol (13) v Real Zaragoza (8) Miguel Angel Brindisi's side have defenders Constantin Galea and Cristobal Parralo ruled out injured. Ivan Helgura and Nan Ribera are in line for recalls. Zaragoza are missing Brazilian striker Paulo Jamelli after he suffered torn ligaments in training this week.

Mallorca (6) v Valladolid (10) Hector Cuper's high-flying European hopefuls will have to return to earth fast for his clash with Valladolid, the in-form side of the second half of the season. Sergio Kresic's side are unbeaten in their last seven league games and will be at full strength for the trip.

Oviedo (11) v Athletic Bilbao (7) Albert Nadj, who was one of six Yugoslav players to boycott last week's matches, returns to boost Oviedo's cause. Athletic will be missing central defender Carlos Garcia, who has a muscle strain in his left leg.

Real Sociedad (9) v Real Betis (12) Real welcome back Oscar de Paula from injury but still still be without Austrian midfielder Dietmar Kuehnbauer. Betis received optimistic injury news this week with star striker Alfonso Perez now expected to return in the next two weeks.

Salamanca (20) v Racing Santander (15) Defender Duvrakov Pavlicic is suspended for Salamanca who desperately need a victory to boost their flagging hopes of survival. Racing, by no means certain of avoiding the drop themselves, have no new injury worries.

Valencia (2) v Extremadura (18) Claudio Ranieri's side will be boosted by the return of experienced Yugoslav defender Miroslav Djukic, back after his one-match boycott last weekend. Extremadura will be without defenders Raymond Kalla, who is on international duty with Cameroon, and Juanito Rodriguez, who has a knee injury.

Atletico Madrid (14) v Villarreal (16) Radomir Antic is likely to stand by Vladimir Jugovic and Juninho, who both flopped so badly in Atletico's comprehensive defeat to Parma in their UEFA Cup semifinal first leg. Moises Garcia and David Albelada are both injury doubts for Villarreal.

European Cup Winners' Cup

Mallorca, Lazio score on road



UNDATED, Apr 9 (Reuters/Internet) Tore Andre Flo scored five minutes after coming on as a half-time substitute to earn Lazio a 1-1 draw at Lokomotiv Moscow in their Cup Winners' Cup semifinal first leg matches on Thursday.

CHelsea-1, MALLORCA-1 Mallorca had gone ahead in the 31st minute through Dani Garcia but will be happy to return to Spain with the draw and an important away goal.

Chelsea took a long time to settle and a glancing header by Marcel Desailly that went narrowly wide was their best effort in the first half as the meaneast defence in Spanish soccer restricted the hosts to speculative long range shots.

The home side were caught cold after 31 minutes when Veljko Paunovic rolled a pass into the Chelsea box and Dani seized on it before firing past Ed De Gooij.

Flo, who has been unable to hold down a regular first team spot, came on for Celestine Babayaro at the start of the second half and made an immediate impact.

Dan Petrescu crossed from the right and Gianfranco Zola headed on, Marcelino Eleana appeared to have the ball covered but failed to clear properly

and Flo reacted quickly and banged the loose ball in.

Chelsea, bidding to become the only team to retain the trophy in its last season before it is absorbed into the expanded UEFA Cup, looked livelier in the second half and player-coach Gianluigi Vialli brought a good save from Carlos Moya with a firm header.

But it was a rare chance for the hosts, who now face a difficult return in two weeks.

"It will be hard for us but it was important to have 1-1 instead of 1-0," said Flo.

He said that Vialli had roasted the players at halftime, insisting on more fight.

"We decided to press much harder in second half," said Flo.

"Now we have to score down there so we have to attack."

Chelsea defender Desailly called for a calm approach in the return. "Patience, patience, we have to go there and try to play," said the Frenchman.

"They will have to come out and play more than they did today and I think we will have many opportunities."

LAZIO-1, LOKOMOTIV MOSCOW-1 Georgian striker Zaza Dzhanaashia had put the Russians ahead in the 61st minute when he rounded Lazio keeper Luca Marchegiani and finished expertly on the turn.

Boksic, who came on for Christian Vieri 12 minutes before his goal, said: "I didn't think I'd get many chances when I came on but I got one and

I'm glad the move came off."

Dzhanaashia, who scored a hat-trick in Lokomotiv's quarter-final victory over Maccabi Haifa, said of his goal. "It was very difficult to shake off three Italian defenders but when I went around the keeper I had the whole goal open."

"I also think we can score the winning goal in Italy and who can do it better than me?," he added.

Before the goal the Russians rarely threatened a tight Lazio defence while the Italians twice went close in the first half, both chances falling to Vieri.

In the 13th minute the big striker headed against the crossbar after a corner by Sinisa Mihajlovic and 15 minutes later the Lokomotiv keeper did well to save his left-footed volley.

Both coaches were satisfied with the outcome.

"Lazio area a great team," said Lokomotiv coach Yuri Syomin.

"Therefore I'm pleased with the result and the way we played. Of course we'll have a very difficult game in Rome."

Lazio coach Sven Goran Eriksson was just as happy. "The draw is justified for both teams," he said.

"We knew that Lokomotiv would be a tough opponent and we were right."

The Swede also paid tribute to Boksic. "He didn't play well for us the whole year and tonight was his only good game."



Chelsea's Norwegian international Tore Andre Flo puts the ball beyond the reach of Mallorca custodian to score the equaliser for his team during their European Cup Winners' Cup semifinal first-leg encounter at Stamford Bridge in London on April 8.

Boksic shows his worth



ROME, Apr 9 (Reuters/Internet) Lazio, already boasting Christian Vieri, Marcelo Salas and the most prolific attack in Italian soccer, have rediscovered another goal-scoring talent in Croatia's Alen Boksic.

Boksic had played only 39 minutes of competitive soccer this season before his side's Cup Winners' Cup semifinal first leg match at Lokomotiv Moscow on Thursday night.

He came on for Vieri in the 65th minute and grabbed a vital away goal which put Lazio in the driving seat for the return leg in Rome in two weeks.

It was his first appearance in over five months, his first goal in over a year and his first goal in European competition since October 1996.

"I'm as happy as a baby who's just found his favourite toy again," said Boksic, who has spent nearly a year on the sidelines following surgery on a right knee injury which forced him out of last year's World Cup.

"I was harbouring so much anger and that's why I ripped my shirt off after scoring my goal. I felt a real rush of emotion because I'd been waiting for that moment for a year and I admit it. I really feared my career as a player was over."

Dynamo deny ties to murdered scout MOSCOW, Apr 9 (Reuters/Internet) A senior Dynamo Moscow official said on Friday that a soccer scout, killed in a hall of bullets in Volgograd, did not work for one of Russia's leading clubs.

"He never worked for us as a coach, scout or in any other capacity," Dynamo technical director Ivan Mozer told Reuters.

Earlier, police in the southern Russian region of Volgograd said Vladimir Saidulinov, a talent scout for Dynamo Moscow, was killed on Thursday evening after a gunman or gunmen fired nine shots from the roof of a building.

The circumstances suggest it was a contract killing, police spokesman Vladimir Konichenko said. A string of Russian sports officials, most recently the administrator at first division club Lokomotiv St Petersburg, have been murdered in recent years.

Boksic has experienced wild swings of fortune over the past 18 months at league leaders Lazio.

This time last year he was playing superbly, and his goals -- including a run of eight in seven straight matches -- had hoisted Sven Goran Eriksson's side to within reach of their first championship title in 24 years.

But Boksic exacerbated a knee injury during a defeat by Parma in April, missed the last five games of the season and failed a late fitness test for Croatia's World Cup squad.

Lazio's title challenge crumbled and they finished seventh. Boksic had surgery in the summer and missed the first 13 matches of this season before making a tentative comeback in November in a league tie at Salernitana and a Cup Winners' Cup tie against Partizan Belgrade.

"When I played those few minutes in Salerno and Belgrade I knew I wasn't fully better," he said. "But now it's different. Quite apart from my goal, I was happy with my performance."

"My knee's not hurting anymore, even if I'll have to keep working on it until the summer," he added before dedicating his goal to his physiotherapist Marco Morelli.

Boksic's re-emergence will not be lost on Lazio's Serie A rivals, who have had quite enough on their hands coping with Italy's Vieri and Chilean Salas for the past six months.

Lazio have scored 54 league goals this season -- exactly two a match -- and have not lost in the league since November 22. They face AS Roma in the derby on Sunday night and Boksic has every reason to stake his claim for a place in the side.

"I remember the last goal I scored before this one," he said in Moscow on Thursday night. "It was in the last derby match we won -- on March 8 last year."



Alen Boksic of Lazio pulling off his shirt after scoring the equaliser against Lokomotiv Moscow during their European Cup Winners' Cup semifinal first leg fixture at Moscow on April 8.

Moya 2 victories shot of No 1

MADRAS, Apr 9: Carlos Moya moved within two victories of regaining the top spot in the ATP Tour rankings, beating Zimbabwe's Wayne Black 6-3, 1-6, 7-5 on Thursday in the Gold Flake Open, reports AP.

The Spaniard, trying to take the top spot from Pete Sampras, will face seventh-seed Rainer Schuttler of Germany in the quarterfinals. Schuttler beat Sweden's Andreas Vinciguerra 6-1, 6-2.

Moya broke Black's service in the fourth game to go up 3-1, then the next four games saw them break each other's serve.

In the second set, Black, ranked 93rd, took a 3-0 lead on serve. Moya hit serve in the next game, but Black broke Moya's serve in the sixth game for a 5-1 lead.

Moya won the third set, with brilliant returns from both.

Meanwhile, Sweden's Mikael Tillstrom upset second-seeded Karol Kucera of Slovakia 7-5, 4-6, 6-2. Kucera was coming off his three-victory performance in the first round of the Davis Cup, enabling Slovakia to upset Sweden.

John van Lottum of the Netherlands also advanced, beating Jonathan Stark of the United States 7-6, 0-6, 7-6.

Euro 2000

Amsterdam Arena may lose right

AMSTERDAM, Apr 9: The Euro 2000 organisers have given Amsterdam Arena two weeks to free up all its seats for sale or lose the right to host matches during next year's championships, reports Reuters.

The Arena, home to Dutch champions Ajax, can hold up to 51,000, but 6,000 debenture-holders do not want to give up their rights during the three-week tournament co-hosted by Belgium and the Netherlands.

"We've spoken with the board of the Arena to let them know. The loss of these seats would deprive the general public of 30,000 tickets," a Euro 2000 spokesman said.

Arena officials said on Thursday they had sent letters to all debenture-holders asking them to forfeit their rights to the seats during the tournament.

The Arena is due to host five games, including a quarterfinal and a semifinal. But, if the stadium cannot guarantee all seats to the organisers by April 22, the Dutch capital will not host any games, the organisers said.

Euro 2000 said it wants to involve Amsterdam but would relocate matches to the Netherlands' three other main stadiums if necessary.

Judge protests her innocence

NEWARK, New Jersey, Apr 9: The boxing judge criticised for her scoring in the Evander Holyfield-Lemuel Lewis heavyweight title fight told a federal grand jury no one attempted to sway her decision, her lawyer said Thursday, reports AP.

Eugenia Williams also answered "absolutely not" when asked if anyone had ever offered her bribes or tried to influence her in any way, said the lawyer, Louis B. Prilucker.

Williams was advised by the US attorney's office in Newark before her appearance that she was not a target of its investigation, Prilucker said. He said the probe into whether there was corruption in the sport started before the March 13 Holyfield-Lewis fight.

The 48-year-old woman, who is a municipal employee in Atlantic City, testified for 90 to 90 minutes Wednesday and was told she probably would not have to appear again, Prilucker said.

He declined to speculate on the target of the federal probe. The US attorney's office will neither confirm nor deny the existence of an investigation, spokesman Michael Drewniak said.

Newspaper reports said the grand jury is investigating whether the International Boxing Federation, one of the world's three major sanctioning organizations, sold rankings and arranged fights in return for kickbacks.

The grand jury has subpoenaed all records of the New Jersey-based IBF since 1982 on rankings and contracts for fights, as well as checks, invoices, expense forms and telephone records, IBF attorney Walter R Stone has said.

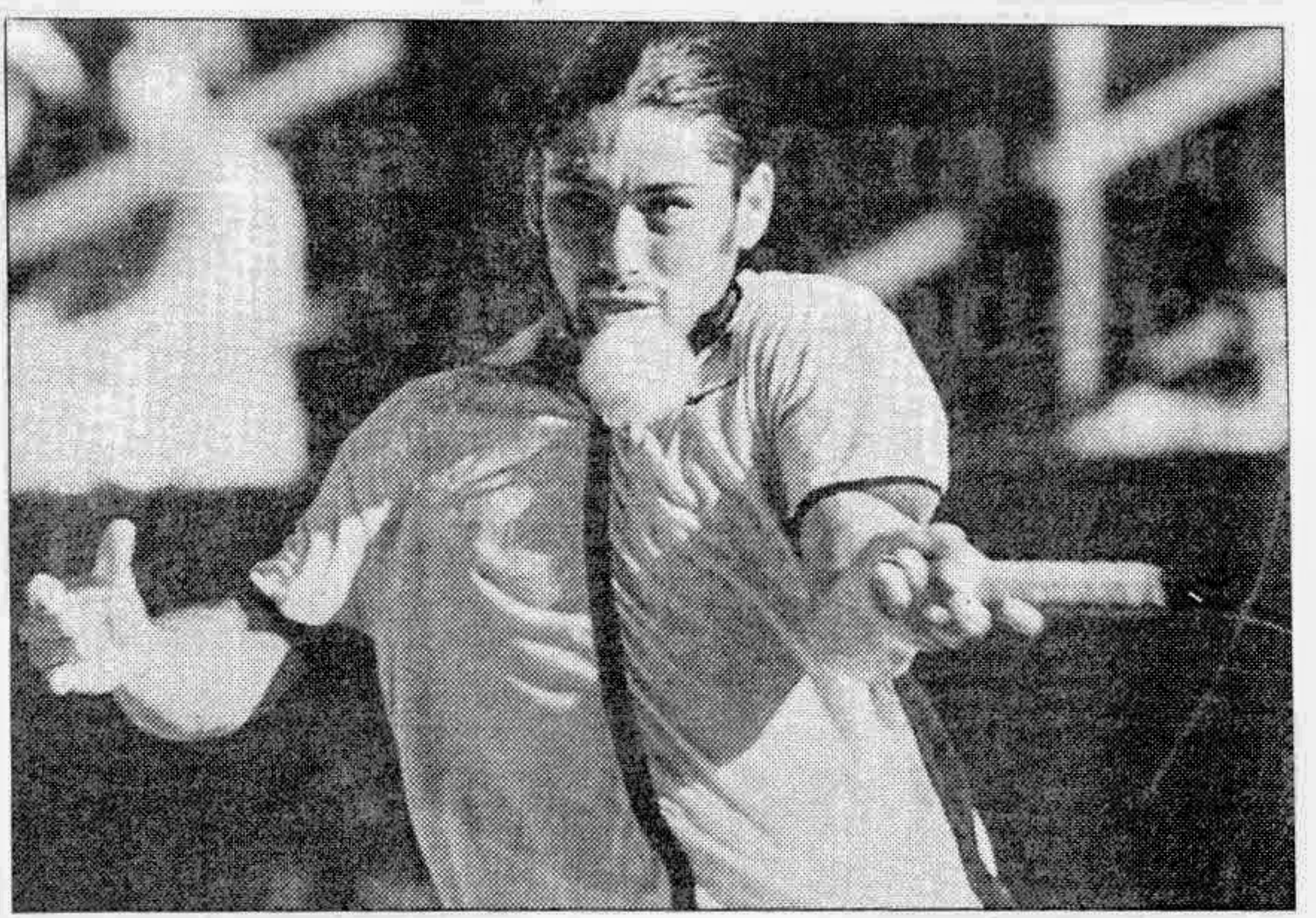
The IBF also is being examined by New York law enforcement agencies because of the controversial draw in the Holyfield-Lewis fight. Of the three judges, only the IBF-picked judge -- Williams -- had Holyfield winning the fight many believed Lewis dominated.

9 Pakistanis held in Mexico

MEXICO CITY, Apr 9: Mexican authorities on Thursday detained and prepared to deport nine Pakistanis, all members of soccer club whose visas had expired, the national migration institute said, reports AP.

The Pakistanis, players and managers of a team that played in the Monterrey '99 Amateur Cup, were detained at Mexico City's airport as they prepared to board a plane to Tijuana, on the United States border. Their Mexican visas had expired on Tuesday.

The Pakistanis were trying to board a plane to Tijuana, most probably with the intention of jumping over to the other side of the border, the United States said. It said they would be deported later in the city.



Chilean Marcelo Rios plays forehand against Albert Portas of Spain during their match in the Portugal Open in Lisbon on April 8. Rios won 6-3, 6-3.

Anna going great guns



AMELIA ISLAND, Florida, Apr 9 (AP): Anna Kournikova looked over to her mother and flashed a big smile she rarely shows on the court. Indeed, this was a victory to get excited about.

The ninth-seeded Kournikova defeated No 1 seed Lindsay Davenport of the United States 6-4, 6-1 on Thursday in the Bausch and Lomb Championships, a victory that intensifies the hot streak that began for the Russian about a month ago.

"I was just happy with the win," she said. "When you beat No 2 in the world, you should be happy."

Combined with her appearance in the final of the Family Circle Cup last week, Kournikova has a chance to move up as many as 11 places in the rankings over a two-week span by winning a title here.

Either way, the world's 16th-ranked player has a big upset to add to her resume. Her last victory of this magnitude came against Switzerland's Martina

Hingis last May in Berlin.

"This was important for me because I haven't beaten a top player in some time," she said. "So, this is very good. It gives me a lot of confidence. I need this."

Her next match will be against No 6 seed Patty Schnyder of Switzerland, a rematch of Kournikova's victory in the semifinals last week.

Schnyder defeated Argentina's Ines Gorrochategui 7-5, 6-2. Elsewhere in the round of 16, No 5 Amanda Coetzer of South Africa beat No 14 Virginia Ruano Pascual of Spain 6-1, 7-5, and Romania's Ruxandra Dragomir defeated No 8 seed Barbara Schett of Austria 6-2, 6-2. Two days after beating American teen star Venus Williams, Canada's Sonya Jeyaseelan fell 6-4, 6-2 to Fabiola Zuluaga of Colombia.

In a late match, defending champion Mary Pierce of France, the fourth seed, overcame a spotty effort to beat No 15 compatriot Nathalie Dechy 2-6, 6-4, 6-3.

Pierce faces a quarterfinal Thursday against NO 7 Con-

chita Martinez of Spain, who beat No 10 Chanda Rubin of the United States 7-6, 5-7, 6-2 in a test of endurance that lasted 2 hours, 40 minutes. Martinez, who won this tournament in 1995, did a nice job changing paces from the baseline on the slow green clay that suits her game perfectly.

"All these players are playing unbelievably right now," Martinez said. "It's hard, but you have to be ready to be out on the court as long as it's going to last. You can never give up and you have to know it's going to be a long match."

No 2 Monica Seles of the United States needed only 41 minutes to defeat Alexandra Fusai of France 6-0, 6-1. Seles has lost only five games in two matches, but still has concerns about her game, especially with her next stop the Fed Cup next week.

"I'm realistic. I have to raise my level of play," said Seles, who will play Coetzer in the quarterfinals. "I need to be more consistent. I'm missing balls left and right. I'm not used to that and it's frustrating."

Roma in no mood to favour leaders



ROME, Apr 9 (Reuters/Internet): For a rivalry which generates Serie A's fiercest derby, Roma have performed a surprising number of favours for arch-opponents Lazio.

In 1976, Roma's late winner against Ascoli saved Lazio from relegation, while last season the men in red-and-yellow capitulated 6-2 on aggregate to their "cousins" in the Italian Cup quarter-finals, setting Lazio on their way to a first trophy in 25 years.

With Lazio six points clear in Serie A and seven games remaining, Sunday's 112th edition of the Rome derby at the Olympic stadium gives Roma the chance to do the ultimate favour -- help their rivals win the second league title in their history.

Ever since Roma won the first derby in 1929, the fixture has split the Eternal City down the middle, from Lazio's predominantly right-wing fans to Roma's inner-city supporters on the political left.

"For Lazio, it's not just a question of local supremacy but three points toward the championship," said Lazio's Roberto Mancini on Thursday.

For Roma, victory would be their first in 10 derbies and help heal the growing rift between manager Zdenek Zeman, a former Lazio coach, and supporters.

"If we win, I want to take Zeman to the Curva Sud (South Bank) and celebrate in front of the fans," said Brazilian defender Aldair, Roma's only

survivor from the 3-0 win over Lazio in November 1994.

Roma fans have endured a year of humiliation after four successive derby setbacks last season. Lazio supporters jokingly list Zeman's telephone number as 3-1-4-1-2-1-2-0 after the separate scorelines.

Of course, Zeman, who famously referred to the derby as "just another match", will also claim victory is more important in fifth-place Roma's late bid to secure an automatic place in next season's Champions' League.

Despite a remarkable 3-3 draw last November when the 10 men of Roma recovered from 3-1 down, the odds are stacked against them.

Lazio are currently unbeaten in a club record 17 successive

league matches and have the best defensive and attacking record in Serie A. On Thursday, they went a long way towards a place in the Cup Winners' Cup final with a 1-1 draw at Lokomotiv Moscow.

Alen Boksic's equaliser in Moscow on his return after five months of knee problems confirmed manager Sven-Goran Eriksson's prediction that the Croat could be Lazio's "best end of season signing".

Boksic will start Sunday's match on the bench with Lazio at full strength.

"I well remember my last goal before Moscow," said Boksic on Thursday. "In the derby on March 8 last year."

Roma, by contrast, are without chief playmaker Luigi Di Biagio, suspended after a sending-off at Bari a week ago.

While Roma's first away win in 12 months at Bari showed signs of a revival, Lazio's scoreless draw at home to AC Milan suggested the pressure of a 26-year wait for the title has become a burden.

With second-placed Fiorentina at home to Bari, who have not won there in 50 years, Lazio cannot afford to drop points. The Rome side must visit Florence on the penultimate day of the season.

If Roma fail to do Lazio a favour on Sunday, they can rely on an old colleague to make sure its significance is underlined deep in the enemy camp.

In 1986, Lazio's current coach Eriksson was manager of Roma. They slip the league title to Juventus after losing at home to relegated Lecce on the penultimate day of the season.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers.

CRYPTOQUIP J Y B J B Q Q X L I Y P D E P Q Z Y X L Z B P M K X T B K B M B P E B M T B J I D P J I Y Saturday's Cryptoquip: TWO AUTO RACERS WHO DROVE THE SAME CAR WOULD CALL THEMSELVES VROOM MATES.